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ABSTRACT

Malawi is a small, landlocked country in the southern sub region of the African continent. The few democratic principles inherited from the British government were marred by the biases of the one political party of the time. This resulted in the government making undemocratic decisions such as banning freedom of the press, detention without trial, declaring the president for life, giving support for a vice president in the government and the party. In 1994, Malawi introduced multiparty democracy. This paper compares and contrasts the primary teacher training program and its teachers' behavior between the period of the 1-party rule and that of the multiparty democracy. The paper explains the impact of democracy on primary school teachers' performance inside and outside the classroom. It concludes that work lies ahead for the government to properly train teachers to cope with the challenges of democracy. (BT)

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Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project

EFFECTS OF DEMOCRACY ON TEACHERS AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN MALAWI

SO 033 984

IEQ undertaken by:

American Institutes for Research

in collaboration with
The Academy for Educational Development
Education Development Center, Inc.
Juárez and Associates, Inc.
The University of Pittsburgh

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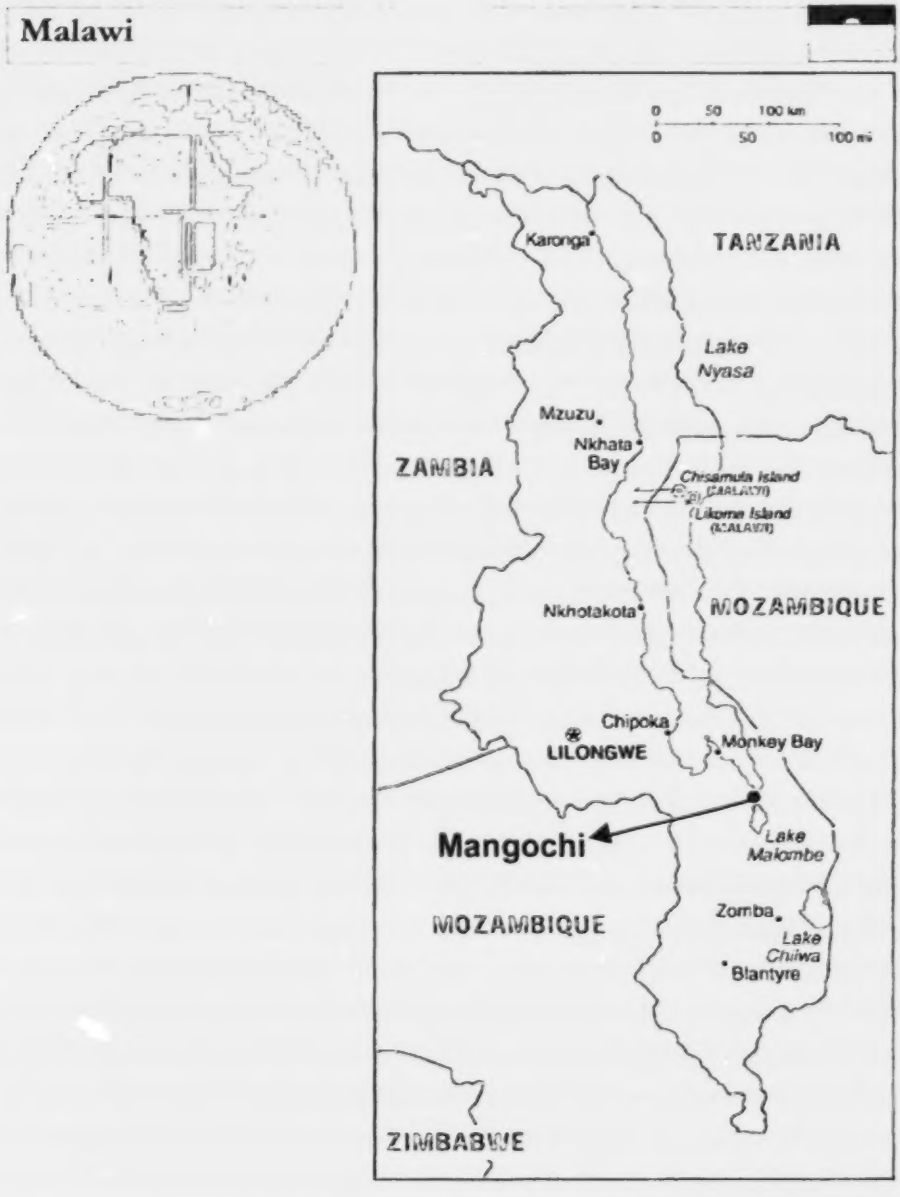
BACKGROUND

Malawi is a small landlocked country in the southern sub region of the African continent. It covers an area of 119,140 square kilometers of which 20 percent is water. The country lies between 9 and 17 degrees south of Equator and is bordered by Mozambique to the east, south and south-west; Tanzania to the north and Zambia to the extreme west, Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.



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Up until 1964 when Malawi gained independence, it was being governed through scanty democratic principles of the British Government as a colonial master. There was a legislature in Zomba, judiciary (protecting legal rights of the indigenous), the army (protecting lives and property) and a formal educational system, introduced by the missionaries (Roy J R Hauya- 1993, p ii). However, these democratic principles were at the mercy of or marred by colour- bar or apartheid between the colonial settlers and the indigenous people. Because of these restrictions very few indigenous people survived in the formal education system. There were enough infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, favourable pupil-teacher ratio of 1: 40 in primary schools, available professionally trained teachers and regular visits by school inspectors. In this context the quality of basic education was very high.

The scanty democratic principles inherited from the British Government were marred by the biases of the one political party of the time. This resulted in the government making undemocratic decisions such as banning freedom of press, expression or affiliation, detention without trial, and declaring the president to be for life, giving no room for vice president in the government and the party.

In 1994 Malawi introduced multiparty democracy which had the following features characterizing it:

- declaration of free primary education
- free elections
- majority rule and minority rights respected
- more than one political party in parliament
- controls on government power through institutions such as Ombudsman and Anti-corruption Bureau
- freedom of press and association or affiliation (many newspapers sprouted)
- recruitment of 22,000 untrained teachers
- no detention without trial
- free and independent judiciary
- automatic progression from one class to the other
- pregnant school girls to go back after delivery

- administrative structure of education was further decentralized from the three regions to the six divisions and zonal levels.

This paper will therefore compare and contrast the primary teacher training programme and its teachers' behaviour during the one party rule to that of the multiparty democracy. It will also explain the impact of democracy on primary school teachers' performance both inside and outside the classroom.

TEACHER EDUCATION PRIOR TO MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY (1964 – 1994)

When Malawi became independent in 1964, it focused its attention on nationalizing primary education system in support of nationality, independence and excellence in the profession.

> *"1965 – 1985:this period was marked by attempts to nationalize education in support of independence…two reviews of the curriculum aimed to make learning relevant to culture and economic needs of Malawi."* (Roy J R Hauya –June 1993).

Unfortunately during this period there were very few primary teacher training colleges which were owned by different missionaries in the country. In order for the government to achieve its goal of nationalizing primary education it found necessary to strengthen the already existing primary teacher training programme. To do this, the following procedures were put in place:

- two sets of primary teacher grades were recommended (T3 based on 2 years of secondary education and T2 based on "O"-level academic qualification)
- candidates had to apply to the Ministry of education after an advertisement and
- the short listed ones had to undergo an interview
- once admitted in a college a trainee was required to achieve pure academic performance (subject matter content) and professional excellency (methodology)
- teaching practice was a determining factor for either a pass or a fail
- tutor's academic and professional qualification was a university diploma or degree.

To achieve excellent teacher performance in the classroom there was a team of subject matter inspectors at the Ministry of Education headquarters who regularly visited the primary schools. During the inspection the teachers were being evaluated on professional preparedness such as current schemes and records of work, lesson plan, teaching and learning aids. The following quotation from a former student teacher shows how serious teaching profession was observed during that period:

"It was regarded as an unpardonable sin to go into a classroom without a teaching aid."

Both inside and outside a classroom the teacher was a powerful figure with all authority in the implementation of teaching and learning processes. He/she could set rules for his/her class, reduce indiscipline and administer punishment to any crime doers without anybody else to question the teacher. The community looked upon a teacher as a role model of their children. This helped the teachers to be successful in instituting discipline without the community and the government opposing. Pupils also came to school already disciplined by their parents and relatives. It was believed that even the walls of houses and schools had sharp ears and eyes to spy for the then party and government.

There is an irony here. Despite teaching and learning under these physical, psychological and emotional difficulties, the quality of education was said to be high. Why did the people say this? The people said this because they observed some qualities befitting a good teacher. For instance, almost all the teachers in schools had undergone a formal 2-year teacher training; they were hard working, dedicated to their job, role models to both the pupils and the community and were able to reduce indiscipline in schools. There were enough pupils' books and teachers' guides for standards 1 to 8. Pupils' mastered the 3 Rs within one academic year. It is surprising indeed to see that pupils learned effectively while the teaching methods applied were teacher centred.

This method of teaching had its problems. It gave very little chance for pupils to think and argue. There were other problems too with this system. For example, teachers were not able to express themselves, consequently a small number of the population wanted to teach. The government too made the situation worse by not recognizing teachers' efforts. There was also very little encouragement from the government for children especially the girl child to go to school. This was evidenced in cultures which think that sending a girl child to school is a waste of time. The traditional song below portrays the culture's thinking that a girl child is a source of income:

"Mwana wanga ukatiwe tizidya msomba" meaning "My daughter please get married so that we can eat fish."

TEACHER EDUCATION IN A MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY

"... my government focuses its development policy on poverty alleviation, with universal primary education as the main feature." (Dr Bakili Muluzi, President of the Republic of Malawi – May 1994).

Indeed free primary education (FPE) was declared in Malawi as from 1994/95 academic year. The enrolment skyrocketed from 1.9 to 3.2 million pupils. What measures were put in place in order to implement this decree since there were not enough teachers, classrooms and instructional materials to

cater for the extra pupils? The government recruited 22,000 untrained teachers to supplement the few trained ones. The pattern of teacher education was changed.

The government introduced the Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP) to cater for the training needs of these new recruits. These untrained teachers are grouped in cohorts and each cohort goes to the colleges for training during holidays. After three months training they write their finals examinations. The area of emphasis in this programme is methodology of teaching. As of now, 16,000 of them have been trained. Once the teachers are in the schools, they are supposed to be helped by the headteachers, mentor teachers and the Primary Education Advisors (PEA). Furthermore, a network of Teacher Development Centres (TDC) is being established in all the districts of the country to enhance the field support of the teachers and to encourage the bottom-up approach. This is implemented by a programme called Malawi School Support Systems Programme (MSSSP) funded by Department For International Development (DFID).

Teacher education under multiparty democracy in Malawi has been done in a manner of fire fighting and haste. The government wanted to achieve its goal of poverty alleviation through free primary education as soon as possible. Therefore, the mode of recruitment and coverage of the curriculum have been hurriedly done. In this context the performance of these teachers both inside and outside classrooms faces a lot of challenges whose impact cause a devastating effect on the quality of basic education in the country.

EFFECTS OF MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY ON TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

The fight for multiparty democracy was purely based on changing the dictatorship that was in place. People did not discern the results of the change and consequently, democracy has had its positive and negative impact on Malawi's education system. This state of affair has been evidenced from the researches which have been conducted by Improving Educational Quality (IEQ)/Malawi Institute of Education and Save the Children, US, Mangochi. On the positive side, the researchers found that many primary schools have been opened and in the areas where many children were not attending schools are now going to school resulting in teacher/pupil ratio of 1:100. The researchers also found that in both rural and semi urban areas children were willing to sit under a tree to get their lessons.

Another important feature that the researchers found was the establishment of school committees which were helping to address issues and install discipline in the schools. This is an attempt to make the community look at the schools as their own and that they are part and parcel of their existence. The interviews further revealed that most communities (81%) carry out self help work at their schools in the form of molding bricks. It was also found that the abolishing of school uniform and age restriction by the government made many children who were unable to attend school to go to school.

Although the government seems to have at least achieved its objective of improving pupils' access to school, there however been adverse effects in the quality of education as the Malawi/IEQ Partnership researchers found in their surveys.

It was found that most of the schools in Mangochi and Balaka are staffed with many untrained teachers (61%) who were recruited following the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE). Unfortunately this is the situation in most Malawi Primary schools. The statistics below from the research conducted by IEQ/Malawi Partnership show that after two years of schooling, as high as 86% of children are unable to reach a full mastery in English reading. This state of affair cannot help to improve the quality of education which the Malawi children get.

Proportion of pupils in Standards 2, 3 and 4 who can read in English

Standard	Month	Non Mastery (0 – 30)	Partial Mastery (31 – 79)	Full Mastery (80+)
2	February October	95.1%87.9%	3.9% 7.6%	0.9% 4.5%
3	February October	81.8%68.1%	11.5%18.8%	6.8%13.1%
4	February October	41.1%25.5%	23.4%23.3%	35.5%51.2%

Source: IEQ Longitudinal Study – Baseline and Follow-up (1999).

Although government with support the donor community has put in place a strategy which is aimed at training all unqualified teachers these efforts lack an ongoing support at classroom level. The untrained teachers cannot be expected to perform well if they receive no guidance on appropriate classroom practice strategy. As was evidenced by the researchers that there was very little inspection by the Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) in schools. At one school the researchers were told that since the beginning of the academic year no PEA had visited the school. This encourages teacher laxity and poor relationship among teachers. For example, at one school the headteacher was unable to produce class registers. He said, *"I am afraid to ask teachers if the registers are written."*

During the October 1999 data collection it was revealed that 4% of teachers were absent for no apparent reason. This shows the weakening of the education system, for example, one headteacher reported that one of his teachers had disappeared for one week and the headteacher did not know the teachers' whereabouts. At another school the headteacher himself had disappeared for one week and the staff at the school did not know where he was. This shows how democracy has been interpreted by teachers. Democracy to them is to do whatever they like without responsibilities. The same was

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found to be true of pupils who also could absent themselves for a term or two and come back to school at the end of an academic year to start a new class. Some of the reasons which were found during the survey for the pupil absenteeism were for example, parents sending their children to do household chores and engaging them in enterprising activities such as fishing, selling fritters in order to generate income for the family. The effect of this is the dropping of pupils' concentration and finally pupils dropping out of school. This scenario was common in most of the schools which were visited by the researchers.

The research further revealed that some teachers had very little time for their profession. This was evidenced when teachers were not able to write and keep lesson plans, records of work, class registers. They were seen busy engaged in small businesses to supplement their income. It is no wonder that newspapers in Malawi are blaming democracy for teachers' shabby dressing, negligence of duty, and poor results in schools.

The statistics below from Malawi National Examination Board give an insight to the type of education Malawi has at the moment:

Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE) Equivalent of 'O' Level:

1997: 22.67%

1998: 16.07%

1999: 13.67%

2000: not out

This trend of the results at Malawi School Certificate Examinations shows a backwash effect from primary education where over 60% of teachers are untrained as the research showed.

The latest research conducted by the IEQ/Malawi Partnership in Mangochi, Balaka and Blantyre districts in February 2001 to assess standard 3 children in Maths and English it is observed that the situation is far from being improved. Almost all the children assessed in English were unable to recognize the alphabet and read the English passage given. Most of the children, individually said, "Sorry I cannot read this." Those who attempted to read made up their own story and read in their mother tongue. Worse still, the majority of the children were unable to do a proper addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in mathematics.

CONCLUSION

This paper has briefly compared and contrasted the two teacher training programmes and their teachers' behaviour before and after the multiparty democracy. From the issues discussed it has been revealed that a lot of work lies ahead for government to properly train teachers to cope with the challenges of democracy.

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